

Kris Nelson Neighborhood Research Program

...a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)

Road Construction Business Survival Guide Brochure, 2012

Prepared in partnership with
City of Victoria

Prepared by
Ethan Stuckmeyer
Research Assistant
University of Minnesota

2012

KNNRP Report # 1333

*This report is available on the CURA website:
<http://www.cura.umn.edu/publications/search>*

Center for Urban and
Regional Affairs (CURA)

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NPCR is coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota. NPCR is supported by the McKnight Foundation.

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Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)
University of Minnesota
330 HHH Center
301--19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Phone: (612) 625-1551
Fax: (612) 626-0273
E-mail: cura@umn.edu
Web site: <http://www.cura.umn.edu>

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Road Construction Business Survival Guide

First Edition, 2012

Presented By The:



Inside:

**Best Practices for mediating the effects of
road construction in your area**

**List of Resources that can help you along
the way**

List of Contact Information for each project

Take Action to Protect Your Business

If your small business is located in a road construction zone, your business will likely be financially impacted. This guide, and the resources within it, are here to be used in a time of extended road closure or construction to help in the process of mediating the effects on your business. While road construction is necessary to improve the infrastructure of the region every few decades, now is the time to plan and strategize so that once the projects are completed, your business is able to thrive and grow with the increased investment into the area. It will be a difficult process for most small businesses in the zone but remember, once an area has major construction it is unlikely it will need work for many years.



Things can happen during a long business impedance; projects get delayed or extended due to unforeseen issues.

Remember that local government and project coordinators are doing their best to make sure the project gets finished with minimal disturbance to your business. It is their job and in their best interest to get the project done on time.

To help small businesses survive road construction, the SouthWest Metro Chamber of Commerce created this survival guide containing appropriate municipal and business contacts and tips for surviving the construction process and continuing to grow even after construction is completed. With this positive thinking in mind, it is best to plan ahead of time for what is to come.

Note: Though this guide was created specifically to address construction issues, many of the strategies described would be helpful in any business interruption event



Get Involved in the Planning

Both Carver County and MNDOT have current and future construction projects listed on their websites that are updated regularly and even posted years before a project is set to take place. You can even sign up for automatic email updates on a specific project. (<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/>)

While these sites are a great way to keep track of the future of your area, as early as a year before a project, the city will begin the process of reaching out to businesses that will be affected within the corridor. This will likely be in the form of mailings sent to business owners inviting them to attend initial planning meetings to learn more about the project and to voice any concerns, questions, or comments. **These early stage meetings are very important**, because they take place when the project managers and city have the most flexibility to incorporate the public's and business's issues into the final project. Watch for this communication/invitation and attend the planning meeting so that you can have a voice in what happens during the construction process.

Each year, cities adopt their budgets that will include a list of all road construction projects for the following year. At this time, the city will begin preparing bid documents for each project. The city will then hire a contractor to work on the project prior to the summer construction season. **The city will then likely hold more pre-construction meetings with the contractor**, business owners will also be invited to this round of meetings. The goal of these meeting will not be to gather input into how the project should be completed, but rather to make the business community aware of

"Attending the planning meetings is critical to, not only the city, but also the business owners." says Matt Podradsky of Chaska, "It allows us to hear what the business community really wants."

the upcoming construction schedule and process. Again, it is critical to attend these subsequent meetings.

This is a great time to get involved in business associations and local Chambers of Commerce. These kinds of organizations provide a way for multiple businesses to get together and become advocates for the business community throughout the construction process. These organizations also provide outlets to market your business and find business partnerships at networking events.



Planning out your Business Strategy

As a business owner, you're always planning and improving your business model. When you're informed ahead of time, road construction is something you can prepare for. Here are some suggestions from business owners who've been through the construction process.

Planning out a solid business strategy you will use during the disturbance period is one of the most important and influential steps you can take to ensure minimal effects on your business

Take note of all communication from the city and attend all meetings. Projects change, and this will ensure you have the most current information and can adapt your business accordingly. It is important to be nimble and flexible.

There's strength in numbers. Communicating with other local businesses is critical in banding together and making your concerns heard. Organizations like business associations and the Southwest Metro Chamber of Commerce are effective in bringing these businesses together and creating a community where ideas can be created and concerns can be vetted. Consider assigning a staff or board member to act as a liaison between the organization and the city. That person can attend planning meetings and

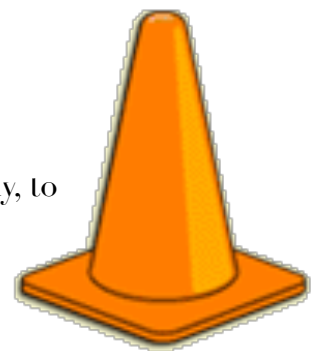
become the voice of the local business communities. This strategy can be effective if business owners want to attend meetings but are too busy to go themselves.

Work with your employees to develop a game plan. Lay out a plan of action that you would like to pursue during the construction. This would include marketing, signage, specials, etc. If possible, listen to what your employees have concerns with and if they have any ideas to help the business during construction. They will appreciate the opportunity to get more involved and the conversation may spark new practices that will benefit your business in the long run.

Ensuring your employees have a thorough understanding of the project and construction timelines will help in communicating to your costumers

As a concerned business owner, you are well aware of the happenings taking place in a city. The general public however, may not be as well connected to what is happening as you. **Informing customers months in advance of the project start date can be crucial to getting them into your store once it starts.** Providing them with information on project dates and easy to understand detour maps to your store, will allow them the ability to navigate the construction and access your business. Stay positive - let your costumers know you will be open and they will have access to your business throughout the project and that you appreciate their loyalty.

Gather customer contact information before construction begins. This is a perfect time, of any, to begin a social media campaign for your business. **Consumers are already online, you must go to where they are.**



Creating a Facebook page, a Twitter page, or an email account is free, quick, easy to use, and they are a great way to inform your followers of great deals, special, events, and best routes. Consider sending weekly emails to customers- if you keep them informed and in the loop, they may not be as likely to change their buying habits during construction.



Identifying organizations that provide grant opportunities can alleviate the burden of bulking up your marketing budget for the construction season. **A list of these organizations is provided in the resource section of this guide.**

Contact lenders. Construction will likely affect your bottom line, it may be a good idea to inform your current lenders of the upcoming project to investigate opportunities to restructure existing debt and lines of credit in light of potentially diminished revenues.

Secure a good line of credit while times are good. It's important to get a line of credit during a good time when sales are up. That way you'll have it when and if there's an emergency.

It's an unfortunate reality, but if you expect a significant decrease in customers once construction begins, **you may need to consider keeping a lean staff.** If someone quits in the spring, you may decide to keep the position vacant if there's a construction project coming up that summer. Other options might include job sharing or reducing hours.

Talk to neighboring businesses and consider pooling advertisement funds. You may even be able to secure a discounted



rate from local advertisement publications. The collaboration can help to get the word out about special events that are happening surrounding the project

When possible, **reducing inventory can be a useful strategy to respond to slower periods due to construction.** If possible, when business is at its normal pace before construction, stockpile inventory that can be used throughout the construction process without having to purchase more.

You may need to rework your budget. For instance, more money might be required for cleaning. While there's little you can do to reduce the dust and noise of a construction site, you can focus on keeping your own business as dust-free as possible. If you only clean your windows once a week right now, you might consider increasing that during the construction period. You may also decide to allocate more time or money for general cleaning and upkeep, in order to keep construction dust to a minimum.



Now that construction has started, what should you do?

Dust and noise are both inevitable during a construction project and aren't areas where you will have a great deal of control. Traffic delays and blocked access routes are also difficulties that may arise during construction. here are some ideas for dealing with these issues.

Access to your business is often the biggest problem during a construction project. A helpful solution is to have signage on the road, your store, and in

parking lots/driveways directing customers exactly where they should go to get to your business. This a major step in keeping your business prosperous during construction, if people don't know how to get to your business they likely won't go searching.



A clear, direct, and easy to read sign(s) can go a long way. The city will likely relax its sign ordinances exclusively for the construction but it is always a good idea to double check what is legal and what is not when placing signs around the city. In most cases, you will have to obtain a permit for a temporary sign.

In addition to your signs, the contractor will also place “Alternate Business Access” signs before intersection to inform motorists when to turn. **Businesses can provide the contractor with a name placard,** which will be placed below the alternate access sign.

In order to get people to continue coming in your door, you will likely need to provide some kind of special or event to attract customer's business. These could be anything from weekly coupon deals, buy-one-get-ones, or creating some kind of rewards program. Its good to get creative with this, make it fun, the best specials can really draw people into your store. Also, this is the best way to get your social media followers involved, it puts your business in front of their eyes. **Posting deals and specials keeps their mind on your store.** The Chamber website and events would also be a great place to get the word out about your promotions at the moment. Again - work with fellow neighboring businesses to create events and specials to drive critical mass.

Communicate with your employees exactly what you would like them to say to the customers regarding the construction. It may be a good idea to put together a small script or piece of paper that has all of the most up to date information so that your customers get a consistent stream of information. Employees can also pass out detour

maps directly to your store, explain upcoming changes, and inform customers of any promotions you might have.

Don't forget to inform your suppliers or distributors about the construction and work with them to come up with a plan of action on how to reduce any hassle for them and you. Could you possibly shift delivery times to late at night or early morning when there are fewer cars on the roads? Could you use another driveway to receive shipments?



The city, chamber, or business associations will likely be hosting a plethora of marketing events throughout the construction process. These are events that are put on to remind customers and local citizens that the businesses are still open and they need their help. It is a good idea to be

involved with these events and marketing methods. These are places where and organizations can pool their resources to work towards a common goal.

Create a friendly rapport with construction workers. While the on-site construction workers aren't the appropriate people to contact about concerns, it can only improve the situation if you create a friendly rapport with them. You might supply complimentary ice water to crews in the summer. They may even become customers themselves on the many days they will be working outside of your business.



It is always a good reminder that the construction workers are just doing the work their supervisor has requested of them. They are not

the people to go to to voice your concerns or issues. **Keep the project manager's contact information close at hand**, they are the person to contact with concerns and will be more than happy to listen to what you have to say. This information is provided in the "Contacts" sections of this guide.

You do have a voice. If your business is having an issue with something, it is likely that others are experiencing the same thing. Speak up and team together in order to get things changed.

You may plan things to go a certain way but projects can quickly change and you must be able to adapt. If sales are significantly slower than you expected you may need to change your approach. Consider taking your product or services to the customer rather than having them come to you. Consider extending your business hours and staying open later in the evening after construction crews are finished for the day. If you've been considering a remodel for your business, why not do it during the construction period? Use this slower period to get things done that you haven't had time to address. Remember to be flexible.



Project Completion – Now what?

Once construction is over, acknowledge the hard work and support of all parties. Thank project contractors and engineers, local government departments such as city engineering, and anyone who's gone above and beyond to work with local businesses. **Everyone appreciates a letter of thanks.**

With the roads back to normal, **you are now beginning to fight to recapture market share and bringing back old customers.** Use your honed social media and marketing skills to create promotions that inform customers that the roadways are clear and open. Use the new construction as a perk to them.

Celebrate the project's completion. Collaborate with nearby businesses, city officials, chambers, and business associations to host a Grand Reopening Event that will create buzz around the area and stimulate shoppers and clients to use the new roadway to get to your business.

Reflect on your experiences during the construction. What went well and what did not go as planned. Support other businesses that are about to undergo a similar process. Give them your support and **share helpful feedback on what you thought were the best practices.**



Business Resources

A list of resources that may be helpful to you throughout this entire process:

Local Assistance:

- SouthWest Metro Chamber of Commerce - www.swmetrochamber.com
- City of Carver - www.cityofcarver.com
- City of Chanhassen - www.ci.chanhassen.mn.us
- City of Chaska - www.chaskamn.com
- City of Victoria - www.ci.victoria.mn.us

County Assistance:

- Carver County - www.co.carver.mn.us
- Road Construction Map - [http://carvergisweb1.co.carver.mn.us/Construction Mapping/](http://carvergisweb1.co.carver.mn.us/Construction%20Mapping/)
- Carver County CDA - www.carvercda.org

State Assistance:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDot) - <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/businessimpacts/>
- MNDOT site for future road projects - <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadwork/future.html>

Business Links and Resources:

- The Grow Minnesota! Business Connection - www.mnbizconnect.com
- Minnesota Business Finance Corporation - www.mbfcc.org
- Enterprise Minnesota - www.enterpriseminnesota.org

Small Business Administration (SBA) Resources and Loan Programs -

www.sba.gov - The SBA works in conjunction with local banks as well, so be sure to check with your local business banker.

Minnesota SCORE www.score-mn.org - Free business consulting and advice from experienced business professionals. SCORE also hosts low cost business workshops.

University of Minnesota, Office of Business Relations - <http://www.research.umn.edu/business/>



Project Specific Resources:

Highway 5 Victoria

- Victoria Detour - <http://www.victoriadetour.org/>
- Think Victoria - <http://www.thinkvictoriamn.com/>
- MNDOT Highway 5 page - <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy5victoria/index.html>
- Victoria Business Owners Association - <http://victoriaboa.org/>
- Victoria Business Development Committee - http://www.ci.victoria.mn.us/business_development_committee.htm



Contact Information

Community Development Director

- Holly Kreft - 952-443-4218 - hkreft@ci.victoria.mn.us

City of Victoria Engineer

- Cara Geheren - 952-443-4222 - cara.geheren@focusengineeringinc.com

MNDot Business Liaison

- Diane Langenbach - 651-234-7721 - Diane.Langenbach@state.mn.us

MNDot Metro District

South Area Engineer for Carver and Scott Counties

- A single point of contact for businesses to answer questions, resolve issues, concerns, etc. before and during construction. She will work to understand business needs to minimize construction impacts to the extent feasible.

Business Development Committee

- Lani Basa - lanibski@gmail.com

Think Victoria - <http://www.thinkvictoriamn.com/>

Michelle Aspelin - 952-484-6015

Southwest Metro Chamber of Commerce - <http://www.swmetrochamber.com/>

- Deb McMillan 952-474-3233

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this guide. It would not have been possible if it were not for the willingness you had to spend time with me in interviews, through email, and over the phone. Thank you for the critiques and the suggestions. I hope this guide will serve as a helpful tool to businesses throughout the Southwest Twin Cities Metro.

-Ethan Stuckmayer

